

# The COURAGE of CAPTAIN PLUM

D. JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY MAGNUS G. KETNER

## SYNOPSIS.

Capt. Nathaniel Plum, of the sloop *Typoon*, lands secretly on Beaver Island, stronghold of the Mormons. He is suddenly confronted by Obadiah Price, an eccentric old man and a member of the Mormon council, who tells him that he is expected. Price ignores Nat's protestations that he has got the wrong man, and bargains for the ammunition aboard the sloop. He binds Nat by a solemn oath to deliver a package to Franklin Pleyce, president of the United States. Near Price's cabin Nat sees the frightened face of a young woman who disappears in the darkness, leaving an odor of lilacs. It develops that Plum's visit to the island is to demand settlement from the king, Strang, for the looting of his ship some time previously, supposedly by Mormons. Casey, the mate, has been left in charge of the sloop with orders to bombard St. James if Nat does not return within a certain time. Price takes Nat to the darkness, to the king's home, and through a window he sees the king and his wives, among whom is the lady of earth wife. Plum calls at the king's office, where he is warned by a young woman that his life is in danger. Strang receives Plum cordially, professes indignation when he hears the captain's grievance, and promises to punish the guilty. Plum again receives warning of his danger. He receives Neil, who is being publicly whipped. The king orders Arbor Croche, the sheriff and father of Winemore, the girl who warned Nat, to pursue and kill the two men. Plum and Neil plan to escape on the *Typoon*. Plum learns that Marion, the girl of the lilacs, is Neil's sister. She is not yet married to Strang. Plum suggests carrying her off on the ship. Neil approves. They agree to include Winemore, with whom Price is in love, in the enterprise. Nat discovers that the sloop is gone. He meets Marion and tells her that Neil has left the island. The thunder of a gun is heard and Marion tells him his ship has been captured by the Mormons. She pleads with him to leave the island and prevent her brother from returning. She says nothing can save her from Strang. Plum finds Price raving mad.

## CHAPTER VII.—Continued.

A shudder ran through the councillor's frame, as if the voice had startled him, his arms and body stiffened and slowly he lifted his head. Nathaniel tried to stifle the cry on his lips, tried to smile—to speak, but the terrible face that stared up into his own held him silent, motionless. He had heard the voice of madness, now he looked upon madness in the eyes that glared at him. In them was no sign of recognition, no passing flash of sanity. The white face was lined with purplish veins, the mouth was distorted and the lips bleeding. Involuntarily he stepped back to the end of the table.

At his movement the councillor stretched out his arms with a sobbing moan.

"Nat—Nat—don't go!"

He fell again upon his face, clutching the table in a sudden convulsion. In the next room Nathaniel had noticed a pail of water and he brought this and wet the old man's head. For a long time Obadiah did not move, and when he did it was to reach out with a groping hand to find Nathaniel. A change had come into his face when he lifted it again, the mad fire had partly burned itself out of his eyes, the old chuckling laugh came from between his lips.

"A little weakness, Nat—a little weakness," he gasped faintly. "I have it now and then. Excitement—great excitement—" He straightened himself for a moment and stood, swaying free from the table, then collapsed into a chair, his head dropping upon his breast.

Without arousing him from the stupor into which he had fallen, Nathaniel again concealed himself in the shadows outside the cabin where he could better guard himself against the possible approach of Mormon visitors. But he did not remain long. He struck a match and saw that it was nearly 11 and a sudden resolution turned him back to the cabin door. He believed that Obadiah would not easily arouse himself from the strange stupor into which he had fallen. Meanwhile he would find food and then conceal himself near the path to intercept Marion.

As he mounted the step he heard for the second time since landing upon the island the solemn tolling of the great bell at St. James, and as he paused for an instant to listen, peal upon peal followed the first until its brazen thunder rolled in one long booming echo through the forests of the Mormon kingdom. There came a shrill cry at his back and he whirled about to see the councillor standing in the center of the big room, his arms outstretched, his face lifted as it had been raised in prayer at the tolling of the same bell the night before—but this time it was not prayer that fell from his lips.

"Nat, ye have returned in the hour of vengeance! The hand of God is descending upon the Mormon kingdom!"

His words came in a gasping, but triumphant cry.

"And tomorrow—tomorrow—" He stepped forward, his voice crooning a wild joy. "Tomorrow—I shall be king!"

As he spoke the cabin trembled, a tremor passed under them, and the tolling of the bell was lost in a sudden tumult that came like the bursting crash of low thunder.

"What is it?" cried Nathaniel. He leaped into the room and caught Obadiah by the arm. "What is it?"

"The hand of God!" whispered the old man again. "Nat—Nat—" It was his old self that stood grimacing and twisting his hands before Nathaniel now. "Nat—a thousand armed men are off the coast! The Lamanites of the mainland are descending upon the Mormon kingdom as the hosts of Israel upon Canaan! Strang is doomed—doomed—doomed—and tomorrow I shall be king!" His voice rose in a wailing shriek. He darted to the door and his cackling laugh rang with the old madness as he pointed into the north where a lurid glow had mounted high into the sky.

"The signal fire—the bell!" he gurgled chokingly. "They are calling the Mormons to arms—but it is too late—too late! Ho, ho, it is too late, Nat—too late!" He staggered back, gripping his throat, and fell upon the



"I Want to Speak with Marion."

floor. "Too late—too late," he moaned, groveling weakly, as if struggling for breath. "Too late—Nat—Marion—" A shiver passed through his body and he lay quite still.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### The Six Castle Chambers.

In an instant Nathaniel was upon his knees beside the prostrate form of the old councillor.

Obadiah's eyes were open but unseeing; his face was blanched to the whiteness of paper; an almost imperceptible movement of his chest showed that he still breathed. Nathaniel lifted one of the limp hands and its clammy chill struck horror to his heart. Tenderly he lifted the old man and carried him to the cot at the end of the room. He loosened his clothes, tore off the low collar about his throat, and felt with his hand to measure the faint beating of life in the councillor's breast. For a few moments it seemed to grow fainter and fainter, and a choking lump rose in his throat as he watched the pallor of death fixing itself on the councillor's shriveled face. What strange chord of sympathy was it that bound him to this old man? Was it the same mysterious influence that had attracted Marion to him? He dropped upon his knees and called the girl's name softly but it awakened no response in the sightless eyes, no tremor in the parted, quivering lips. Very slowly as the minutes passed there came a reaction. The pulsations of the weakened heart became a little stronger, he could catch faintly the sound of breath coming from between the old man's lips.

With a gasp of relief Nathaniel rose

to his feet. Through the door he saw the red glare in the northern sky and heard the great bell at St. James ring a wilder and more excited alarm. For a few moments he stood in silent, listening inaction, his nerves tingling with a strange sensation of impending peril. Obadiah's madness, the mysterious trembling of the earth beneath his feet, the volcano of fire, the clanging of the bell and the councillor's insane rejoicing had all come so suddenly that he was dazed. What great calamity, what fearful vengeance, was about to come upon the Mormon kingdom? Was it possible that the fishermen and settlers of the mainland had risen, as Obadiah had said, and were already at hand to destroy Strang and his people? The thought spurred him to the door. The blood rushed like fire through his veins. What would it mean to Marion—to Neil?

In his excitement he started down the path that led to the lilac hidden home beyond the forest. Then he thought again of Obadiah and his last choking utterance of Marion's name. He had tried to speak of her, even with that death-like rattling of the breath in his throat; and the memory of the old councillor's frantic struggle for words brought Nathaniel quickly back to the cabin. He bent over Obadiah's shriveled form and spoke the girl's name again and again in his ears. There came no response, no quiver of life to show that the old man was conscious of his presence. As he worked over him, bathing his face and chest in cool water, the feeling became strong in him that he was fighting death in this gloomy room for Marion's sake. It was like the whis-

pering, he felt sure that the alarm sounding from St. James had drawn away the guards and that there would be nothing to interfere with his plan. If she had already left the cabin he would return quickly to Obadiah's. In his eagerness he began to run. Once a sound stopped him—the distant beating of galloping hoofs. He heard the shout of a man, a reply farther away, the quick, excited yelping of a dog. His blood danced as he thought of the gathering of the Mormon fighters, the men and boys racing down the black trails from the inland forests, the excitement in St. James. As he ran on again he thought of Arbor Croche mustering the panting, vengeful defenders; of Strang, his great voice booming encouragement and promise, above the brazen thunder of the bell; he saw in fancy the frightened huddling groups of women and children and beyond and above all the coming of the "vengeance of God"—a hundred hosts, a thousand men—and there went out from his soul if not from his lips a great cry of joy. At the edge of the forest he stopped for a moment. Over beyond the clearing a light burned dimly through the lilacs. The sweet odor of the flowers came to him gently, persuasively, and nerved him into the open. He passed across the open space swiftly and plunged into a tangle of bushes close to the lighted window.

He heard a man's voice within, and then a woman's. Was it Marion? Cautiously Nathaniel crept close to the log wall of the cabin. He reached out, and hesitated. Should he look—as he had done at the king's window? The man's voice came to him again, harsh and angry, and this time it was not a woman's words that he heard but a woman's sobbing cry. He parted the bushes and a glare of light fell on his face. The lamp was on a table and beside the table there sat a woman, her white head turned from him, her face buried in her hands. She was an old woman and he knew that it was Marion's mother. He could not see the man.

Where was Marion? He wormed himself back out of the bushes and walked quickly around the house. There was no other light, no other sign of life except in that one room. With sudden resolution he stepped to the door and knocked loudly.

For a full half minute there was silence, and he knocked again. He heard the approach of a shuffling step, the thump, thump, thump of a cane, and the door swung back. It was the man who opened it, a tall giant of an old man, doubled as if with rheumatism, and close behind him was the frightened face of the woman. An involuntary shudder passed through Nathaniel as he looked at them. They were old—so old that the man's shriveled hands were like those of a skeleton; his giant frame seemed about to totter into ruin, his eyes were sunken until his face gave the horror of a death mask. Was it possible that these people were the father and mother of Marion—and of Neil? As he stepped to the threshold they timidly drew back from him. In a single glance Nathaniel swept the room and what he saw thrilled him, for everywhere were signs of Marion; in the pictures on the walls, the snowy curtains, the cushions in the window seat—and the huge vase of lilacs on the mantle.

"I am a messenger of the king," he said, advancing and closing the door behind him. "I want to speak with Marion."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

### Pat Got the Day Off.

There is a happy-go-lucky, ready-witted Irishman in the employ of a builder. A few weeks ago Pat asked for a day off.

"Me grandmother's dead, sor, an' begorra I'd like to go to the funeral," said Pat.

He was granted the leave of absence.

Ten days afterward Pat asked for another day off.

"What's the matter now?" asked Mr. Dobbins, his employer.

"Matter, it is, sor?" replied Pat. "Shure, me grandmother's dead, the saints rist her soul."

"Why, that's what you said before."

"Shure I did that, but that wor me mither's mither, and this is me father's mither."

He got that day, but when the very next week Pat returned to his employer asking for another day off, Mr. Dobbins was perplexed.

"More grandmothers dead?" he asked.

"Yis, sor, there be. It's me mither's mither, sor, and she's goin' to be buried the morrow, sor."

"Ah, Pat," exclaimed Mr. Dobbins, "I have you there. Your mother's mother died before, you know."

"So she did sor; so she did. But me mither wor married twice, sor."

Mr. Dobbins was so completely stumped that he gave Pat the day off.

### There Are Others.

The supervisor of penmanship in the Yonkers public schools has declared in court his inability to identify the handwriting of his own wife.—New York Sun.

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## A LINGERER.



The Eldest Daughter—If Harry had lived in the old days he'd have made a good knight.

Her father—I don't know much about that—but it takes him a long time to say 'good night' now.

## How It Happened.

He was limping down the street with one arm in a sling and both eyes in mourning.

"What's the matter?" queried a friend. "Automobile accident?"

"No," replied the other, sadly. "I met a man who couldn't take a joke."

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